



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ELIZABETH HEFFERNAN
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567-3100 Fax: (978) 567-3121

www.mass.gov/dfs



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

For Immediate Release: December 28, 2011
Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3381

**State Fire Marshal Coan and Fire Chiefs' Association
Say Make Working Smoke Alarms Your New Year's Resolution**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Chief Paul Zbikowski, president of the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts, urge residents to take simple steps to ensure they stay warm and stay safe this winter.

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "The recent tragic fatal fire in Stamford, CT underscores the need to practice fire safety every day. Since fires happen every single day, it is unfortunate that most people don't think that fire can happen to them. The best approach is to practice good fire prevention, and install smoke alarms and make and practice a home escape plan."

Chief Zbikowski said, "If you heat your home by burning *solid fuels* (coal, firewood, pellets), make sure to dispose ashes properly. Place ashes in a metal container with a lid on it and place away from the house, garage and deck. Last year we had so many fire started when people placed ashes in paper or plastic bags and left them in the hallway, the garage or under the deck." He added, "It's important to have the chimney annually cleaned by a certified professional, to prevent the accumulation of creosote and to check for cracks in the lining."

Heating #2 Cause of Home Fires

Heating is the second leading cause of fires in the home in Massachusetts. One of every seven space heater fires in the past five years has caused a fire death. December through February are the traditionally the peak months for house fires as the cold weather drives people indoors and there is more use of space heaters.

"Tragedy frequently strikes in winter months where one fifth of fire deaths are caused by heating," said State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan. "We can't stress enough the importance of taking precautions with space heaters, like keeping them at least three feet from anything that can burn, as a simple step to safeguard you and your family this winter."

Administrative Services • Division of Fire Safety
Hazardous Materials Response • Massachusetts Firefighting Academy

Residents often turn to space heaters, pellet stoves, or their fireplace to offset the rising cost of heating fuel. For the most part, these alternative-heating devices can be safe. However, there are simple steps you can take to safeguard you and your family this winter.

Working Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on each floor of your home. Test the alarms once a month and change batteries twice a year. Heating appliances are the leading sources of carbon monoxide poisoning in the home.

Space Heaters Need Space

Space heaters can cause fires if they are placed too close to flammable materials such as drapes, furniture or bedding. Keep anything that can burn three feet away from the space heater and use only heavy-duty extension cords.

Natural gas and fuel oil are both safe and efficient. Make sure to have a professional clean and tune-up your furnace and hot water heater every year. This can prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Gas leaks can be poisonous so the gas company adds something to make it smell like rotten eggs. If you suspect a leak, move outdoors without touching anything like a light switch and contact the local fire department immediately.

Be a Good Neighbor

Make sure to check on elderly neighbors regularly in the cold months.

For more information on winter heating and fire safety, visit www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe or contact your local fire department.

